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CONTEMPORARIES

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# Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

Ward Lamon

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



Ward Hill Lamon  
(From a Photograph in the Author's Possession)

Lawrence Kansas, May 20, 1885

Ward H. Lamon, Esq., Denver, Col.

Dear Sir,--There are now but few left who were intimately acquainted with Mr. Lincoln. I do not call to mind any one who was so much with him as yourself. You were his partner for years in the practice of law, his confidential friend during the time he was president. I venture to say there is now none living other than yourself in whom he so much confided, and to whom he gave free expression of his feeling towards others, his trials and troubles in conducting his great office. You were with him, I know, more than any other one. I think, in view of all the circumstances and of the growing interest which the rising generation takes in all that he did and said, you ought to take the time, if you can, to commit to writing your recollections of him, his sayings and doings, which were not necessarily committed to writing and made public. Won't you do it? Can you not, through a series of articles to be published in some of the magazines, lay before the public a history of his inner life, so that the multitude may read and know much more of that wonderful man? Although I knew him quite well for many years, yet I am deeply interested in all that he said and did, and I am persuaded that the multitude of the people feel a like interest.

Truly and sincerely yours,

(Signed)

J. P. Usher.



A Story of Eugene Field

HENRY W. FISCHER, in the May *Bookman*, New York. Excerpt

Abraham Lincoln's quondam bosom friend [Ward Hill Lamon] and Eugene Field met in Denver, in the late seventies, and their acquaintance soon ripened into friendship. There was indeed "much in common between the two men," as the poet writes in that beautiful letter here reproduced. All he said about his friend applied with equal truth to him who penned the unconscious eulogy:

I have in admiring and affectionate remembrance his keen and vigorous intellect, his wide culture, and the cordiality of his generous, thoughtful nature. I recall with pleasure the very many delightful hours we spent together. . . . He was a great, good, and gracious man, God rest him! . . . You are lonely without him; but you should not wish him called back again from that sweet companionship in eternity which he is enjoying now.

And again in another letter:

[He] had a particularly noble expression, a look of commingled magnanimity, boldness, candor, and high breeding. These portraits do not convey that serenely noble expression as I recall it; yet how is it possible for any human art to preserve to us the tender, admirable, solacing qualities of those we love?

Does not this read like a posthumous estimate of the bard of Buena park?

Besides the harmony of sentiments, there were other bonds of sympathy between the two men. Field was a rising journalist, a man of humor, a poet who promised great things—gifts which no one appreciated more fully than the accomplished Lamon. They were one in their love of "Little Boy Blue," in tender regard for woman, in the appreciation of song. The "Recollections" ["Recollections of Abraham Lincoln 1847-65," by W. H. Lamon] say that Lamon "often startled Lincoln from his melancholy by striking up a comic air and pushing hilarity to extremes." Small wonder that he was a hearty admirer of Field's muse, perhaps the earliest, surely the most distinguished. Besides, the elder man was a perfect mine of information. Field was a mere boy when this country went through its greatest crisis; it meant much to him, then one of the editors of the *Denver Tribune*, to be informed on the great national question, to study the history of the war, and of the martyred President with one who had seen much of both.

In those Denver days Field used to "drop in" on Lamon whenever he had an hour to spare, and on one of those occasions found his friend asleep on the floor. It was a habit the colonel had. Most probably he acquired it through his as-

sociation with Lincoln, who was very fond of taking a nap in that fashion. Lincoln was six feet four in height, and Lamon half an inch taller. Both may have experienced difficulty in finding beds and lounges suited to their length. Field waited ten, fifteen, twenty minutes. Lamon slept on. He might continue to snore for another hour—longer than the poet-editor could afford to remain away from his office. Finally Field sat down and penciled these verses on a piece of yellow paper that he found on the table:

As you, dear Lamon, soundly slept  
And dreamed sweet dreams upon the floor,  
Into your hiding-place I crept  
And heard the music of your snore.

A man who sleeps as now you sleep—  
Who pipes as music'ly as thou—  
Who loses self in slumbers deep  
As you, O happy man, do now,

Must have a conscience clear and free  
From troublous pangs and vain ado;  
So ever may thy slumbers be—  
So ever be thy conscience, too!

And when the last, sweet sleep of all  
Shall smooth the wrinkles from thy brow,  
May God on high as gently guard  
Thy slumbering soul as I do now.

It was the work of ten minutes. He pinned the sheet to the lapel of Colonel Lamon's coat and quietly walked out.

ful - Contemporary  
Lamon

tude, and pleasure or disappointment was strongly depicted on their countenances, principally the latter. We now returned home and Mrs. Russell and Amelia went to visit Mrs. Bird and the Princess of Bellmonte, and did not return until half past eleven o'clock.

LAMON'S LIFE OF LINCOLN."

UNION CLUB,  
BOSTON, December 5, 1910.

MY DEAR SIR:

I give you below my recollections of the incidents connected with the preparation and publication of the first volume of Lamon's "Life of Abraham Lincoln," the only volume of the work published. This volume was published in 1872 by James R. Osgood & Co., of which firm I was then a member, and I had full charge of the publication. You are at liberty to make such use of the following statement as may serve the purpose of historic truth. Very truly yours,

JOHN SPENCER CLARK.

HORACE WHITE, Esq.,  
18 West 69th Street,  
New York.

I. About 1868 I learned that W. H. Herndon was preparing a life of Mr. Lincoln, and that he had a quantity of fresh material that would throw new light on some phases of Mr. Lincoln's life and character. I opened correspondence in the name of my firm with Mr. Herndon with reference to the publication of his work. This correspondence was continued for some time, Mr. Herndon not being ready to submit his copy.

II. Some time in 1870 Col. Ward H. Lamon appeared on the scene as the owner of all the Herndon material, which he had purchased,<sup>1</sup> and also as the possessor of much other valuable material which he had procured through his acquaintance and semi-official connection with Mr. Lincoln, and he came prepared "to talk business" in the matter of publication. I was convinced that Colonel Lamon had the material, and he stated that this material was to be used and put in literary form by Chauncey Black, a clever writer, and a son of Jeremiah Black, a tough, hard-headed old democrat of the pro-slavery school, and a leading, if not the dominating spirit on constitutional questions in the Buchanan Cabinet.

III. I raised objection to a life of Mr. Lincoln being prepared under such apparently hostile influences, and Colonel Lamon as-

<sup>1</sup> See Newton, *Lincoln and Herndon*, 306.

sured me that nothing politically hostile to Mr. Lincoln should go into the work; that Mr. Black was a great admirer of Mr. Lincoln, and that the work should be in full sympathy with the fundamental points in Mr. Lincoln's life and character. Colonel Lamon later brought Mr. Black to see me, and he also assured me of his loyalty to Mr. Lincoln, and his good faith in presenting the political aspects of his career. On the strength of these assurances we entered into a contract for publication.

IV. While the proofs of the early chapters as they came in to me showed a lack of appreciation of the finer qualities of Mr. Lincoln's nature, and a disposition to keep the rougher, coarser, aspects of his pioneer life prominent, I saw nothing I could positively object to until I received the proofs of Chapter xv, purporting to give a brief history of the Kansas struggle. Here I saw well known historic facts perverted to shield the pro-slavery democratic party from "high crimes and misdemeanors" in their attempt to bring in Kansas as a slave state. I protested to Colonel Lamon that the account was not only untrue, but was also wholly inconsistent with Mr. Lincoln's position on the Kansas question. After considerable discussion and the exhibition of much feeling on the part of Mr. Black, Colonel Lamon fully sustained me and authorized me to substitute the text as it now stands in place of what had been prepared by Mr. Black.

V. This experience with the Kansas matter made me suspicious of Mr. Black's good faith, and when the proofs came of the chapter pretending to give an historic record of the very memorable period between Mr. Lincoln's election and his inauguration, it was only too evident that justice to Mr. Lincoln during this critical period was sacrificed to an effort to extenuate if not excuse the shambling policy of the Buchanan administration — a policy which weakly supported the Constitution with one hand, while attacking it vigorously with the other hand. I put the matter squarely before Colonel Lamon and he saw the unwisdom, if not the absurdity, of compromising Mr. Lincoln in the slightest degree at this great period when in the tremendous swirl of political complications his was the sanest mind of all — sanest not only because he stood for the Union, but also for the inherent power of the Union under the Constitution to protect itself.

Mr. Black's effort to condone the interpretation of the Constitution by the Buchanan Administration during its last days — an interpretation which Mr. Lincoln had to fight during his whole term — in a life of Lincoln, was therefore unceremoniously cut out, as appears at the bottom of page 527; and although I have not



a distinct recollection of the details that followed, I do know that Mr. Black was greatly angered, that there was a split, and that we got no more copy for the work.

VI. Colonel Lamont impressed me as a man of fair intelligence and good sense, gained by a sort of rough and tumble experience, and while in no way a man of literary culture or of positive convictions in regard to the higher phases of Mr. Lincoln's character, he was an admirer of Mr. Lincoln as an honest political statesman, and in the matter of having Mr. Lincoln's life truly set forth he only needed to have the truth shown to him to stand by it. I think he at first put full confidence in Black, that there was a sort of good-fellowship understanding between them that was "busted" when Lamont saw clearly that Black's adherence to the flesh-pots of his democratic faith was stronger than his desire to see full justice done to Mr. Lincoln's memory.

VII. The publication of the work, which was entered upon with a belief in its historic importance, and high anticipation of its commercial success, came, with the publication of the first volume, to an untimely end. No more work was done upon it and the undertaking proved a losing venture all around; and I came to class the outcome as among those publishing experiences which show the futility of endeavoring to combine essentially antagonistic elements in the production of an important literary work.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Copy of an original photograph, size 14 x 16 inches, made in Washington about 1886.

Lamon was born in Winchester, Va., January 6, 1828, and spent his boyhood in Bunker Hill, West Virginia. He came to Danville, Illinois in 1847 to study medicine under an uncle, Dr. Theodore Lamon. Changing his plans, he studied law in the office of Judge Oliver L. Davis and spent one winter in a law school in Louisville, Kentucky. In 1852 he became the local law partner of Abraham Lincoln and the two maintained offices in the Barnum building, on the present site of the First National Bank Building. In 1856 he was elected prosecutor for the Old Eighth Circuit, when the partnership was dissolved and he removed to Bloomington, the home of David Davis, the Circuit Judge. In 1860 he was re-elected, but resigned in February, 1861, when the Circuit was reduced by the separation of the five southern counties. Joseph Cannon was chosen prosecutor of the southern district, at a special election. Lamon was active in the campaign for nomination of his friend for the presidency. He spent the night preceding Lincoln's nomination in forging admission tickets to the Wigwam, and the hall was filled with Lincoln partisans while the Seward supporters were parading. Their din helped along the Lincoln stampede. Lamon accompanied Lincoln to Washington, and as Marshal of the District of Columbia, acted as his personal bodyguard. It is generally believed that had he not been absent in Richmond, Virginia, on a secret mission for the President, Booth would not have had opportunity for the assassination.



Lamon was Marshal of the Day at Gettysburg, and after leading the parade, introduced his friend when he delivered his famous address. After the death of Lincoln, Johnson offered Lamon the position of postmaster-general in his cabinet, which offer was declined. Lamon died in Martinsburg, West Virginia, May 7, 1893, and is buried in the village cemetery. Nearby is the grave of General Henry Lee, of Revolutionary War fame.

A biographical sketch entitled "Lincoln and Lamon: Partners and Friends" by Clint Clay Tilton appeared in the Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for 1931.



This house at 604 N. Madison St. was the home of Ward Hill Lamon from 1859 to 1861. Lamon was Abraham Lincoln's closest friend and was with the President during the years in Washington.— (Pantagraph Photo)

## Bloomington Man Frequently Overlooked in Lincoln Tales

Ward Lamon  
One of Abe's  
Best Friends

*(References and information for the following article were furnished by Wayne C. Townley, president of the McLean County Historical Society, and from Mr. Townley's collection of biographies of Abraham Lincoln—Editor.)*



By **BILL ADAMS**

On this, the 149th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, Central Illinois can again take pride in the fact that the circuit riding lawyer who would one day become President of the United States argued many cases throughout the area.

His association with prominent area men of the day are well-known. But one man, for a time a Bloomington resident, who was with the President throughout his career, is frequently overlooked in Lincoln stories.

Ward Hill Lamon, one-time Bloomington resident, was more than an associate of Abraham Lincoln, he was one of Lincoln's few intimate friends. From the time his association with Lincoln began in 1852 until Lincoln's assassination in 1865, he was the President's closest and most confidential friend.

**ABE'S LAW PARTNER**

He first knew Lincoln in 1852 when he became the law partner in Danville of the future President. He was Lincoln's only partner on the circuit and frequently the two men traveled together.

Born in 1828 in Frederick County, Va., Lamon first went to Danville in 1847 and was admitted to the bar after studying at Louisville, Ky.

In 1859 he came to Bloomington and his law office was located in the building which now houses Barker's Shoe Store in the 200 block of North Center St. His home at 604 N. Madison St. still stands. Next door, at 602, was the home of General William W. Orme. This house also remains.

**LED SINGING**

During the days of the circuit riders, the lawyers found evening entertainment in telling stories, singing—and, for some, drinking. Lamon is described as having an excellent voice which he frequently used to lead his friends in song.

Ezra Prince, a one-time secretary of the McLean County Historical Society, described Lamon as "cast in a heroic mold," being more than 6 feet tall and weighing 225 pounds. He had long black hair and was "a 19th Century Hercules," Mr. Prince reported.

He was apparently the type of man who would today be called "the life of the party." Mr. Prince recalled that in 1859 the Ladies Library Association of Bloomington was having a tea. The unpredictable Lamon appeared in front of the house dressed as a minstrel and started dancing and singing. It must have broken up the austere party for the ladies.

**LINCOLN TEMPERATE**

Another biographer reports that when it was time to have a drink, the circuit lawyers could always depend on Lamon to furnish the jug of whiskey. As Mr. Prince

reported, "He could drink any man in the state under the table."

More than one biographer notes the strange friendship between Lincoln and Lamon, as Lincoln was a temperate man. But close friends they were. It is noted that Lincoln was always addressed as "Mr. Lincoln," and returned the same formalities when speaking to or about other men.

There was, however, one exception. President Lincoln referred to Lamon as "Hill," and Lamon to the President as "Abe." There is no record of the President being on a first name basis with any of his other associates.

**WENT TO WASHINGTON**

After Lincoln was elected President, Lamon left Bloomington and accompanied the President-elect to Washington. He was responsible for Lincoln's safety on the trip to Washington. When there were rumors of a plot to assassinate Lincoln, Lamon is credited with changing the itinerary to a secret night journey from Philadelphia through Baltimore to Washington.

Throughout the more than four years Lincoln was in office Lamon held the post of Marshal of the District of Columbia. In 1864, when plots against the life of the President were suspected, Lamon moved into the White House and slept in the room next to Lincoln. He was also in charge of the White House grounds guards.

He was often used on special missions for the President and during the war organized a "loyal" brigade of Virginia volunteers. He served in the field for a time as a colonel.

Lamon was frequently the center of bitter controversy. Many of his detractors accused him of being a Southern sympathizer. But through all the years in Washington, Lincoln never turned away from his friend.

**DEPLORED ABSENCE**

Lamon's one regret in life was that he was in Richmond, Va., (on business for the President) the night Lincoln was shot. He always felt that the assassination would have been unsuccessful had he been present.

In April of 1865 Lamon completed his service to the President by accompanying the body to Springfield.

Lamon was married twice. His first wife, Angelina Turner, died in 1859 and is buried in Bloomington Cemetery. His second wife, Sally Logan, daughter of Judge Stephen Logan of Springfield, died



Ward Hill Lamon

at Brussels, Belgium, in 1892.

In his later years Lamon lived in Washington, D. C., and Denver, Colo., and traveled in Europe. He died May 7, 1893, near Martinsburg, W. Va., where he is buried.

## A LINE O' TYPE OR TWO

*Hew to the Line, let the  
quips fall where they may.*

Reg. U. S.  
Pat. Office

### LINCOLN AND LAMON

Danville, Ill., Nov. 20—Bob Wright, Civil War Round Table member and Danville newspaper man, has a theory that Abe Lincoln might not have caught an assassin's bullet if a Danville lawyer had been in his theater box on April 14, 1865.

Not just any Danville barrister, you understand, but a special one current at the time.

This was Ward Hill Lamon, once Lincoln's law partner in Danville, whose lovely black mustache was attached to 6 feet 2 inches and 250 pounds. When Mr. L. scampered off to Washington, he took along Lamon as his Presidential bodyguard.

And when he caught the train, he was prepared, according to Historian James Gray, as Mr. Lamon had "a brace of fine pistols, a huge bowie knife, a blackjack, and a pair of brass knuckles."

Certainly, one of these implements would have been suitable to apply to the person of John Wilkes Booth.

Mr. Wright does not believe that J. W. B. would have tried if Mr. Lamon had his avoirdupois draped about the theater box, as he was alert and certainly would have clobbered Mr. Booth before he could get his pistol out. It is true that Mr. Booth would have been giving away almost as much weight as Gov. Kerner in his present battle with the entire legislature.

But Mr. Lincoln had sent Mr. Lamon to Richmond to attend a meeting. And the night he left, two days before A. Lincoln was shot, Lamon wrote later, he pleaded with Lincoln not to go out at night while he was gone, especially to the theater. And Lamon added that Mr. Lincoln said to John Palmer Usher, secretary of the interior, who was present, "Usher, this boy is a monomaniac on the subject of my safety. . . . He thinks I am going to be killed; and we think he is going crazy." He then added, "What does anyone want to assassinate me for? If anyone wants to do so, he can do it any day or night, if he is willing to give his life for mine. It is nonsense."

This was not exactly an accurate reading as has been established. So Lamon renewed his plea for the promise, and Mr. Lincoln said, "I promise to do the best I can towards it."

Well, as it turned out, Mr. Lamon was right, and a theater that night was one place that Mr. Lincoln should have stayed out of. And, after the assassination, Mr. Lamon's health and fortune declined, and he went to Denver, where he met Eugene Field, who wrote a poem about him.

The entire matter is, of course, largely academic, as by this time Mr. Lincoln probably would have been carried away by some germ or other. Not very many people live to be more than 150 years old.

## A LINE O' TYPE OR TWO

*Hew to the Line, let the  
quips fall where they may.*

Reg. U. S.  
Pat. Office

### LINCOLN AND LAMON—II

Danville, Ill., Nov. 21—And what kind of man was Ward Hill Lamon, Lincoln's Danville law partner who might have fended off John Wilkes Booth the night he felled the President in a theater box?

Well, said Historian James Gray, he loved to forgather with the boisterous boys in a tavern and sing comic songs, exchange lively stories, and drink deep, long draughts. "Usually good-natured," he and a boon companion once felt irresistibly impelled to beat a grocer, Jacob Schatz, because he refused to sell them an unlimited amount of whisky on credit. Legal recourse seemed not to have been available to the victim of this adventure, but nursing his bruises, Mr. Schatz thought of an appropriate revenge. He stopped selling whisky.

Mr. Lamon once promoted a fair which gained immortality in the anecdotes of this vicinity. From Virginia, he could see clearly that no fair would be official without horse races, but unfortunately, he owned the lone racing horse. So he raced this beast against its best record, decided that the horse had triumphed, and gravely awarded it a \$5 prize.

Historians spoke feelingly of his fine black mustache; his stature, 6 feet 2 inches, 250 pounds; his fine voice with which he wooed various ladies. They felt that the quiet, low sell Lincoln was attracted to Lamon because he lived a care-free young manhood which Lincoln had never known.

When good-doers admonished Mr. Lamon about his drinking habits, he always countered with this thought: "I have never drunk so much that I could not say with perfect lucidity, 'She stood at the gate welcoming him in,' " and, if you think that's easy, try it the next time you get a mite skyward.

It was at the Chicago nominating convention that chose Lincoln as the Presidential candidate that Ward Hill Lamon reached his peak. He made an extended tour of Chicago saloons, selecting among the drinkers those with the greatest lung power.

Presently he had a small army at his command. He presented each with forged credentials to get into the nominating convention. Keeping them trained to razor edge on 18¾-cent-per-quart whisky, he unleashed them the next day, and at each mention of Abe's name, these fellows set up such a clatter as might be expected from a herd of miffed elephants going out on strike.

Well, Mr. Lincoln appointed Lamon Presidential bodyguard, and when they caught the train, Ward Hill was appropriately equipped with two pistols, bowie knife, blackjack, and brass knuckles. His first chore came when Mr. Lincoln grew worried about his inaugural address and sent Lamon to find the bag it was in. Lamon was gone quite a time, came back and reported that he had found the wrong bag, which contained a dirty shirt and a quart of whisky, and he said, "The whisky was excellent, and I returned the shirt."



38 Brookside Road,  
Needham, Mass.,  
March 8, 1963

Library of The Lincoln National  
Life Foundation,  
Ft. Wayne,  
Indiana

Dear Sirs:

I am interested in obtaining information about  
Ward H. Lamon for a short article I am planning to write  
on "The Man Who Might Have Saved Lincoln."

Would you have any information about him that you  
could possibly send me? It has been difficult, in parti-  
cular, to obtain personal details about Lamon, such as  
his height and weight, why he was called Colonel, when in  
his career he had just his mustache and when his beard,  
whether he was a baritone or base, and other such details.

Any help you might be able to give me would be very  
much appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

*Richard N. Livingstone*

Richard N. Livingstone

641  
643  
739 ✓  
886  
897 ✓  
912 ✓  
968 \* ✓

March 12, 1963

Mr. Richard N. Livingstone  
38 Brookside Road  
Needham, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Livingstone:

In reply to your letter of March 8, 1963, requesting information on Ward H. Lamon, we are enclosing herewith what material we have on Lamon as printed in past issues of Lincoln Lore.

Also enclosed is a Xerox copy of our only photograph of Lamon. This shows him in his later years, with a white moustache but no beard. He was described often as "burly", a rough and tumble fighter, with "massive" fists. The photograph gives an idea of the physical bulk of the man. His weight must have been over 300 pounds at the time the picture was made.

Following is a description of Lamon taken from a thesis by Lavern Marshall Hamand, University of Illinois, in 1949:  
(Title: "Ward Hill Lamon: Lincoln's 'Particular Friend'")

"He was attractive in both appearance and personality. In the 1850's Lamon reached the full maturity of a splendid physical specimen. He was a tall man, six feet two inches, and his height was made even more impressive by stocky proportions; he was a physical giant who took much pride in his strength. Lamon's features were regular, with a cleft chin (when not covered by a heavy beard), rather generous mouth and well-shaped nose. His eyes were blue. A high forehead was outlined by a heavy mane of brown hair. Except for one period in middle life, Lamon wore a beard of some type; as a young man it was mustache and chin whiskers; later it was confined to a full mustache. Unlike Judge Davis, who was four inches shorter, Lamon managed from his middle years on to carry three hundred pounds with some grace, because of his large frame. There were few complexities to the personality of Ward Hill Lamon. He was of that type of genial extrovert who so develop because their great physical advantages give them



a sense of complete confidence in themselves. Such men love to display their athletic prowess and do on the slightest provocation. Their appetites are excessive; their capacities, enormous. They make friends easily. They give their trust freely, almost naively, and show great anger when it is violated. Such men are likely to be violent partisans, expressing their opinions plainly and openly. Lamon was that sort of open-handed genial extrovert with an overlay of Virginia-bred manners and tastes.

(Apparently the "Colonel" was an honorary title conferred upon him in Illinois, around 1860.)

"The 'Colonel' possessed in ample quantities all the frailties of human nature. His appetites were large whether food, drink, tobacco, or high-flown phraseology; his letters abound in purple passages. He was careless to a painful degree in business matters, correspondence, with his money, and in public with his tongue.....He had no political influence-.....He was merely the good friend of the President....(As to good qualities) Lamon possessed much personal charm. Physically he was a very handsome man until overindulgence coarsened him. He had a winning personality, a rather boisterous but well-developed sense of humor, and a good but untrained tenor voice; he was a convivial person. Such traits of personality were almost directly opposite those possessed by Mr. Lincoln but they probably explain the attraction Lamon held for the President. The two shared in common a sense of humor that had as a backdrop the old Illinois circuit days. Mr. Lincoln liked his marshal and enjoyed having him around.....This relationship between the President and his self-appointed body guard and "particular friend" continued until that night in Ford's Theatre when the life of the one and the public career of the other ended."

I hope the above information, and the enclosures will be of help to you in writing your article on "The Man Who Might Have Saved Lincoln".

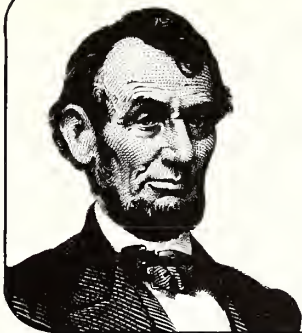
Sincerely yours,

(Mrs.) Ruth P. Higgins

rh  
enc.







# Lincoln Lore

May, 1980

Bulletin of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum. Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor.  
Mary Jane Hubler, Editorial Assistant. Published each month by the  
Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801.

Number 1707

## A Progressive Admiration: Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln

The Progressive Era was a great period for American historical writing. The two most learned Presidents since Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, occupied the White House in this age of reform. Both men were historians. The historical discipline was becoming more professionalized every day. With the deaths of the contemporary writers who knew Abraham Lincoln personally — William H. Herndon, Ward Hill Lamon, Isaac N. Arnold, John G. Nicolay, and John Hay — Lincoln scholarship was becoming more critical and objective. One of the masterpieces of Lincoln literature, Lord Charnwood's biography, appeared near the end of the era. A Republican and Progressive, Albert J. Beveridge, would soon bring writing on Lincoln into the mainstream of professional historical scholarship.

The greatest spur to the study of Lincoln in this period was the celebration of the centennial of his birth in 1909. To this factor, one must surely add Theodore Roosevelt's interest in the life of the Sixteenth President. It was a lifelong interest inherited from his father. Although Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., had married into a Georgia slaveholding family, he was an ardent Republican. He apparently met the President and Mrs. Lincoln while he was in Washington in 1862, working to establish a system whereby allotments for soldiers' families could be deducted from their pay before all the money went into the hands of corrupt sutlers and liquor peddlers. The elder Roosevelt served on the United States Allotment Commission in New York and performed considerable work for the common soldiers and their families. He knew Nicolay and Hay well.

Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., though a young man during the Civil War, chose to hire a substitute for his army service rather than to enlist. Some have speculated that his son later exhibited great zeal for combat out of embarrassment at his father's course during the war. The father certainly influenced the son in more direct ways. From his father, the future President gained an admiration for the Republican

party, a penchant for trying to help the common man, and a keen interest in Abraham Lincoln.

Roosevelt's view of Lincoln changed with time. Before the turn of the century, his admiration of the Sixteenth President was conventional for a budding Republican politician with a sense of history. Roosevelt considered slavery "a grossly anachronistic and un-American form of evil," and he naturally admired the man who ended it. He hated "the professional Abolitionists." They were the sort of people who always agitated about something and, in the case of slavery, they happened for once to be correct. Roosevelt thought that the ultimate extinction of slavery had been a certainty, but it might have taken another hundred years without the Civil War. In sum, he liked Lincoln's moderation.

Around the time of the Spanish-American War, when Roosevelt was Assistant Secretary of the Navy, he had a

rather special interpretation of Lincoln's life. "I feel that in this age we do well to remember," Roosevelt told the Republican Club of New York on Lincoln's Birthday in 1898, "... that Abraham Lincoln, who prized the material prosperity of his country so much, prized her honor even more, that he was willing to jeopardize for a moment the material welfare of our citizens that in the long run her honor might be established." A jingoist critique of men who valued the stock market more than the national honor followed and was aimed at the many businessmen who had little enthusiasm for American imperialism.

Early in Roosevelt's career, Lincoln appears to have been his second choice among historical heroes. George Washington was, "not even excepting Lincoln, the very greatest man of modern times," Roosevelt told Henry Cabot Lodge in 1884. Almost a decade later, he was still describing Washington as the "greatest of Americans" and an exemplar of the sort of national greatness forged by "feats of hardihood, of daring, and of bodily prowess." Hunting in his youth had made Washington a great man.

Later in his life, Roosevelt was careful to link the two



From the Louis A. Warren  
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 1. Theodore Roosevelt.



men's names in public utterances. He referred always to "the two greatest statesmen this country has ever had." He never said publicly that he preferred the one or the other. Like his friend Henry Cabot Lodge, Roosevelt was also a great admirer of Alexander Hamilton, but Hamilton was far too anti-democratic in political sentiment to be very quotable by an active politician. Roosevelt, however, professed to see a lot of Hamiltonian Federalism in Lincoln:

He [Lincoln] seized — half unwittingly — all that was best and wisest in the tradition of Federalism; he was the true successor of the Federalist leaders; but he grafted on their system a profound belief that the great heart of the nation beat for truth, honor, and liberty.

Roosevelt despised Thomas Jefferson. He thought "the worship of Jefferson a discredit" to his country, and the more he studied Jefferson, the more profoundly he distrusted him. He was "the most incapable executive that ever filled the presidential chair," but he "did thoroughly believe in the people, just as Abraham Lincoln did." For a man who detested Jefferson, Lincoln was a crucial link to America's liberal tradition. The more liberal and reform-minded Roosevelt grew, the more interested he became in Lincoln. Neither the conservative Hamilton nor the bland Washington could supply that vital impulse.

As early as 1885, Roosevelt criticized a Supreme Court decision which favored conservative interests by referring to Lincoln's critique of the Dred Scott decision. Most often, however, it was Lincoln's practicality and moderation which appealed to Roosevelt. In 1900 he told a correspondent that, even though Lincoln was one of the two greatest Americans, he had made mistakes. Appointing Simon Cameron as Secretary of War and making General Ambrose E. Burnside commander of the Army of the Potomac were big mistakes, but Lincoln had to work with the materials at hand to achieve his goals. He could not, for example, accomplish anything by ignoring Cameron's influence in Pennsylvania. "If Lincoln had not consistently combined the ideal and the practicable," Roosevelt concluded, "the war for the union would have failed, and we would now be split in half a dozen confederacies."

When, as President of the United States, Roosevelt faced a serious anthracite coal strike in 1902, he recalled reading Nicolay and Hay's history of the Lincoln administration and took inspiration from their depiction of the Sixteenth President as a resolute man badgered by contradictory advice from extremists on both sides. What Roosevelt liked best about Lincoln in this period of his life was his strong conception of the Presidential office. Roosevelt had "a definite philosophy about the Presidency," he told Henry Cabot Lodge in 1908. "I think it should be a very powerful office, and I think the President should be a very strong man who uses without hesitation every power that the position yields." In fact, he called this the "Jackson-Lincoln theory of the presidency," and he contrasted it with "the Buchanan principle of striving to find some constitutional reason for inaction." As he neared the end of his second term in 1908, Roosevelt pointed to Washington and Lincoln as strong Presidents who acted in a disinterested way as the people's Presidents. He still mentioned Washington with Lincoln, but Lincoln was the really important figure in justifying Roosevelt's active conception of the Presidency. He had said years earlier that Lincoln "was the first who showed how a strong people might have a strong government and yet remain the freest on earth."

William Howard Taft was Roosevelt's handpicked successor, but his conception of the Presidential office was far different from Roosevelt's. The restless ex-President quickly moved into sharp opposition to Taft's brand of Republicanism. Roosevelt's view of Lincoln moved with him steadily to the left. At Ossawatimie, Kansas, in 1910, Roosevelt declared that property should be the servant and

not the master of America, and he legitimized his radical doctrine by quoting from Lincoln's first annual message to Congress:

Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.

At the Lincoln birthday banquet of the Republican Club of New York in 1911, Roosevelt spoke on "Abraham Lincoln and Progressive Democracy." He was no longer celebrating the moderate President Lincoln, who had mediated between the extremists during the Civil War. Now he hailed Lincoln for meeting "the problems of the present, not by refusing to use other methods than those that had solved the problems of the past, but by using the new methods necessary in order that the old principles could be applied to the new needs." This progressivism, Roosevelt insisted, made Lincoln "the real heir of George Washington."

Roosevelt still could not muster any enthusiasm for Thomas Jefferson, who inspired other liberal reformers in this era.

The founders of our Government, the men who made the Constitution and who signed the Declaration of Independence, tended to divide into two groups, those under Hamilton, who believed in a strong and efficient government, but who distrusted the people; and those under Jefferson, who did not believe in a strong or efficient government, but who in a certain sense did trust the people — although it was really distrust of them to keep the government weak. And therefore for decades we oscillated between the two tendencies, and could not develop the genuine strength that a democracy should have until Abraham Lincoln arose, until he and the men with him founded the Republican party on the union of the two ideas of combining efficient governmental force with genuine and whole-hearted trust in the people.

Roosevelt supported increasingly liberal reform ideas, including the recall of judicial decisions. In criticizing the Supreme Court, the ex-President invoked Lincoln's denunciation of the Supreme Court of Roger B. Taney and the Dred Scott decision. Roosevelt repeatedly linked his New Nationalism and his third-party candidacy for the Presidency on the Progressive ticket with the heritage of Abraham Lincoln.

All this was too much for the living link to the Sixteenth President, Robert Todd Lincoln, to swallow. Though he rarely engaged in public disputes over the meaning of his father's life, Robert, a Taft Republican, felt that he had to answer Theodore Roosevelt. The resulting public letter from Lincoln's son is a remarkable document which testifies to the changes in the Lincoln family's political beliefs over the years.

The Government under which my father lived was, as it is now, a republic, or representative democracy, checked by the Constitution which can be changed by the people, but only when acting by methods which compel deliberation and exclude so far as possible the effect of passionate and short-sighted impulse. A Government in which the checks of an established Constitution are actually, or practically omitted — one in which the people act in a mass directly on all questions and not through their chosen representatives — is an unchecked democracy, a form of Government so full of danger, as shown by history, that it has ceased to exist except in communities small and concentrated as to space. A New England town meeting may be good, but such a Government in a large City or State, would be chaos.

As I understand it, the essence of Mr. Roosevelt's proposals is that we shall adopt the latter form of Government in place of the existing form. This, in simple words, is a proposed revolution, peaceful perhaps, but a revolution.



Robert thought that such a revolution would "surely... lead to attempted dictatorships."

Robert not only disagreed politically with the form of government he thought Roosevelt was promoting but also believed that Roosevelt was in error in asserting that there were Abraham Lincoln texts which supported such doctrine. "President Lincoln," said his son, "wrote many letters, made many public addresses and was the author of many documents. I do not know of the existence in any of them of a word of censure, or of complaint of our Government, or of the methods by which it was carried on." Roosevelt's proposal for the recall of judicial decisions brought a specific response:

His [Lincoln's] attitude toward the Dred Scott decision is urged as in support of the pernicious project for the recall by popular vote, of judges and of judicial decisions. He thought it an erroneous decision, but his chief point in reference to it was not its error, but that it indicated a scheme, and was a part of it, for the nationalization of human slavery. He never suggested a change in our government under which the judges who made it should be recalled, but said that he would resist it politically by voting, if in his power, for an act prohibiting slavery in United States territories, and then endeavor to have the act sustained in a new proceeding, by the same court reversing itself.

Finally, Robert interpreted the Gettysburg Address for Roosevelt by asserting that, when Lincoln "prayed (if I may use the word) that 'Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth,' he meant, and could only mean, that government under which he lived, a representative government of balanced executive, legislative and judicial parts, and not something entirely different — an unchecked democracy."

The great irony, if not tragedy, of this misunderstanding between Robert T. Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt was that both men sincerely revered Abraham Lincoln's legacy and that both were quite knowledgeable about him. To be sure, Roosevelt said always that Lincoln and Washington were the greatest men our republic had produced. Even when he spoke at the dedication of Gutzon Borglum's Lincoln statue in Newark in 1912, Roosevelt complimented the people of Newark for commemorating "in fit form one of the two greatest statesmen that this country has ever had." It seems as though it was almost a political effort always to mention Lincoln and Washington together. Sectionalism may have been strong enough and Lincoln's image partisan enough still to necessitate paying homage to a Virginia hero as well.

Lincoln grew more "progressive" over the years in Roosevelt's view, and he apparently grew progressively more important for Roosevelt. In private utterances, Roosevelt seemed less reluctant to mention Lincoln without at the same time recalling Washington's memory. Close association with John Hay, who served as Secretary of State under Roosevelt, certainly increased his interest in Lincoln. After Hay's death in 1905, Roosevelt told Lyman Abbot:

John Hay's house was the only house in Washington where I continually stopped. Every Sunday on the way back from



From the Louis A. Warren  
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 2. Robert Todd Lincoln.

church I would stop and have an hour's talk with Hay. We would go over foreign affairs and public business generally, and then I would usually get him to talk to me about Lincoln — for as you know, Lincoln has always meant more to me than any other of our public men, even Washington.

That same year, Hay had sent Roosevelt a ring to wear at his inauguration as President of the United States.

DEAR THEODORE:

The hair in this ring is from the head of President Lincoln. Dr. Taft cut it off the night of the assassination and I got it from his son — a brief pedigree.

Please wear it tomorrow; you are one of the men who most thoroughly understand and appreciate Lincoln.

I have had your monogram and Lincoln's engraved on the ring.

*Longas, O uitinam, bone dux, ferias Praestes Hesperiae*

Yours affectionately  
JOHN HAY

In Roosevelt's *Autobiography*, written in 1913 at the height of his Progressivism, he recalled Hay's gift:

John Hay was one of the

most delightful of companions, one of most charming of all men of cultivation and action. Our views on foreign affairs coincided absolutely; but, as was natural enough, in domestic matters he felt much more conservative than he did in the days when as a young man he was private secretary to the great radical democratic leader of the '60's, Abraham Lincoln. . . . When I was inaugurated on March 4, 1905, I wore a ring he sent me the evening before, containing the hair of Abraham Lincoln. The ring was on my finger when the Chief Justice administered to me the oath of allegiance to the United States; I often thereafter told John Hay that when I wore such a ring on such an occasion I bound myself more than ever to treat the Constitution, after the manner of Abraham Lincoln, as a document which put human rights above property rights when the two conflicted.

Shortly before he gave his address on Lincoln in Hodgenville, Kentucky, on the hundredth anniversary of Lincoln's birth, Roosevelt told his son, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., "Lincoln is my great hero, as you know, and I have just put my heart into this speech."

Theodore Roosevelt did much to keep Lincoln in the public eye. As Roosevelt changed over time, so did his image of the Sixteenth President. At first he celebrated the practical moderate who injected popularity into the party of strong government. Later, Roosevelt invoked the image of a radical democrat who kept the country's vital principles alive by inventive applications of them to a changed political environment. Through it all, Roosevelt's degree of interest in Lincoln grew in intensity. Even though publicly he was careful to tout Lincoln and Washington together as America's two greatest heroes, in private he admitted, "For some reason or other he [Lincoln] is to me infinitely the most real of the dead Presidents." Washington gained only a sort of obligatory fealty from Roosevelt. He never engaged Roosevelt's rhetorical attention as Lincoln did. Theodore Roosevelt admired Washington as a statue, but he admired Lincoln as a man.



## CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY 1979-80

by Mary Jane Hubler

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Dr. Kenneth A. Bernard, 50 Chatham Road, Harwich Center, Mass.; Arnold Gates, 289 New Hyde Park Rd., Garden City, N.Y.; Carl Haverlin, 8619 Louise Avenue, Northridge, California; James T. Hickey, Illinois State Historical Library, Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois; E.B. (Pete) Long, 607 S. 15th St., Laramie, Wyoming; Ralph G. Newman, 175 E. Delaware Place, 5112, Chicago, Illinois; Hon. Fred Schwengel, 200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C.; Dr. Wayne C. Temple, 1121 S. 4th Street Court, Springfield, Illinois. New items available for consideration may be sent to the above persons, or the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum.

1979

## LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

1979-22

Lincoln Memorial University Press/(Device)/Fall, 1979/Vol. 81, No. 3/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolniana and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American/Education./ [Harrogate, Tenn.]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10 1/2" x 7 1/2", 141-220 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$3.00.

## LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

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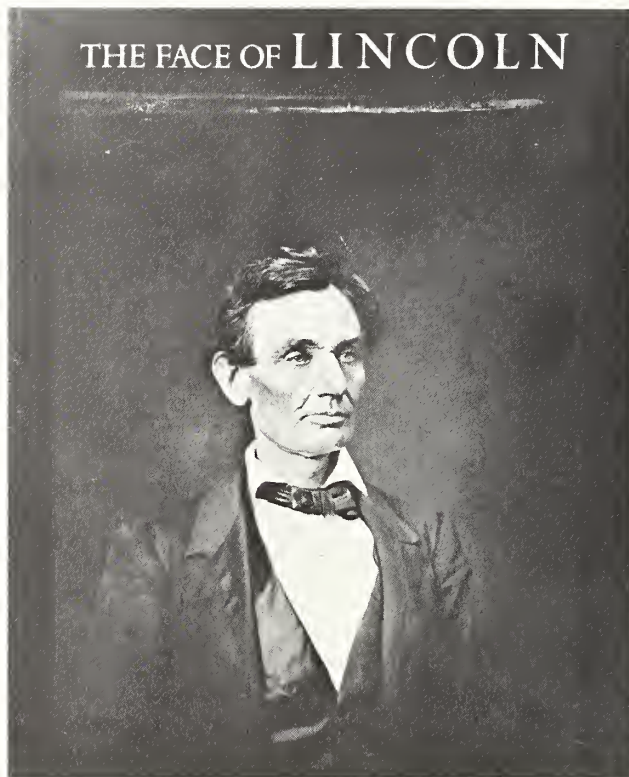
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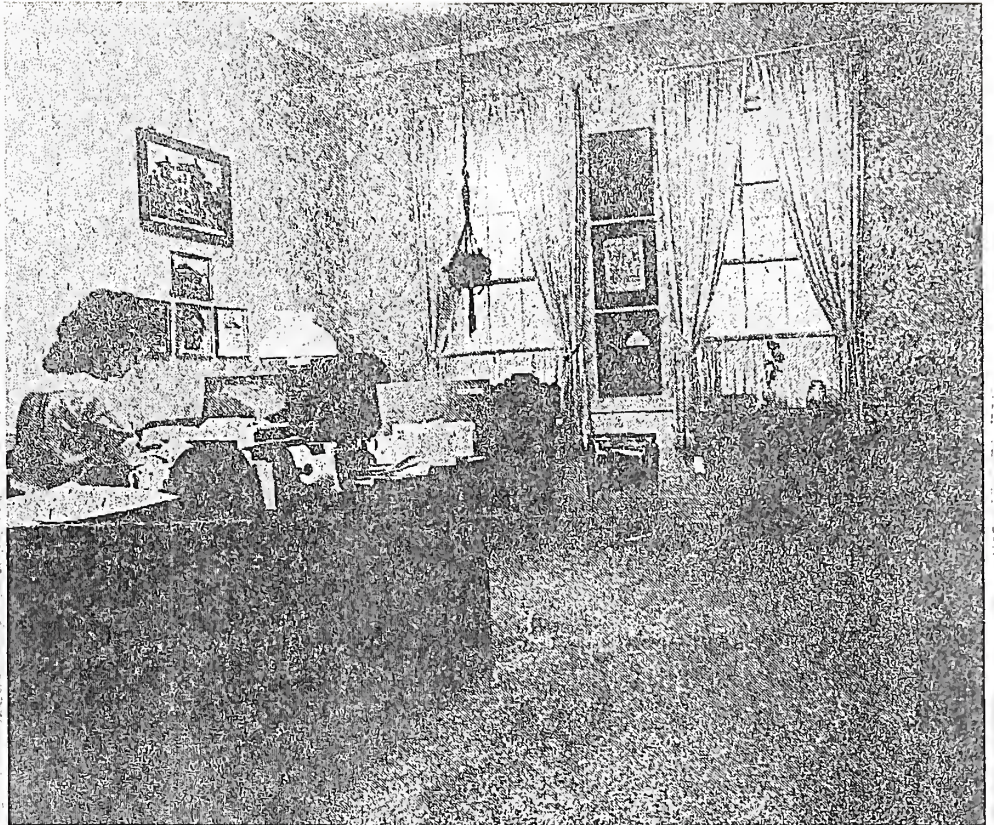
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C-N photo by Rich Stefaniak

Sharon Pichon, a secretary in the Wright and Wright Law Offices, works in a room once occupied by Ward Hill Lamon, a law partner and bodyguard of Abraham Lincoln.

## Cash, land sought to save old home

By Carl Young

C-N Staff Writer

An appeal is going out for money — and a vacant lot — to save one of the oldest houses in Danville.

The Vermillion County Museum Society has organized a fund-raising committee to find a new location for the Ward Hill Lamon house, which has to be moved or destroyed because of plans by the Danville Sheraton Inn to expand.

The single-story wood frame house at 302 W. North, which most lately has been occupied by Wright and Wright Law Offices, was the home of Lamon, who was Abraham Lincoln's law partner and bodyguard.

So far, \$4,500 has been given to the fund by an anonymous donor. Contributions may be sent to the Vermillion County Museum Society Lamon House Account in care of Lloyd Hilleary at the Bank of Danville, 100 N. Gilbert. The bank's phone number is 443-3300. The Danville City Council has offered the society its choice of city-owned lots at First and Gilbert in south Danville, but Dorothy Sturm, society president, said the group is looking for a site closer to the museum, 116 N. Gilbert.

A lot nearer the museum would make it easier for the society to manage and maintain the house, Mrs. Sturm said. The society is seeking enough money to finance

moving expenses and re-establishment of the home. Museum officials have not yet set a goal as to how much money will be needed to move the house, but added that it would be substantially more than the \$4,500 donation.

Mary Barentine, Sheraton manager, said the hotel doesn't have any specific expansion plans and is waiting for economic conditions to improve before deciding exactly what to do. Buying the land occupied by the Lamon house is just the first step toward enlarging the hotel, she said.

"We want to see the house saved as much as anybody," she said. Although museum officials would like to have the house moved by the first of the year, Barentine said she doesn't know when an expansion might start.

"You tell me when interest rates are going down," she said.

Society members have said the museum doesn't have enough money to pay for moving the house and buying a lot. The City Council has frozen property taxes for next year and has said it is willing to donate land it already owns, but cannot spare any cash.

Although much interest in the house comes from its association with Lamon, museum officials say the house itself is worth saving. There may be some brick houses in Danville older than the 130-year-old Lamon house, but cer-



Ward Hill Lamon

... Abe's compatriot

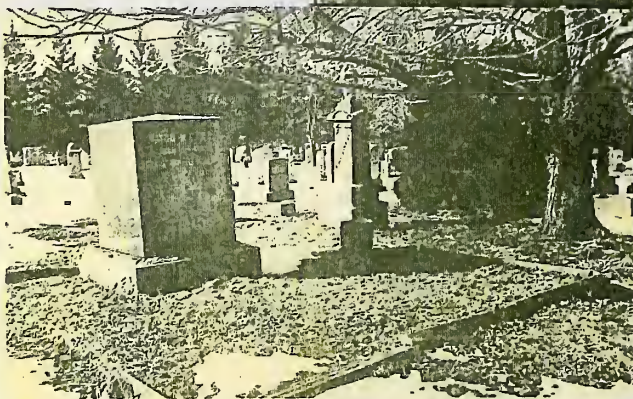
tainly there are no older wood houses, Mrs. Sturm said.

Lamon, who lived from 1828 to 1893, was a lawyer in Danville for many years, according to the book written by Katherine Stapp, "Footprints in the Sands, Founders and Builders of Vermillion County Illinois." Lamon and Lincoln were law partners for many years until Lamon left Danville to become district attorney in Bloomington.

After Lincoln was elected president, Lamon went to Washington and was assigned the duty of protecting the president during the Civil War. In 1865 Lincoln sent Lamon to the South on official business. While Lamon was away Lincoln was assassinated.



# Abe's Good Friend



Journal photo by Tim Johnson



Ward Hill Lamson is shown, standing in center above, in a family portrait. The Presbyterian Cemetery in Gerrardstown, left, is the site of the family burial plot of the close friend, adviser, law partner and bodyguard of President Abraham Lincoln whose birthday is celebrated today. Lamson died in Martinsburg.

Editor's note: The following history of Ward Hill Lamson was taken from "The Berkeley Journal" published by the Berkeley County Historical Society. The information was compiled by Virginia Gold, Edna Lee Johnson, Mrs. William G. Ruth and Dorothea W. Feigley for the publication.

Berkeley and Jefferson counties may not be able to claim Abraham Lincoln as one of their own but both can do the next best thing and claim his best friend and law partner as a one-time resident.

Ward Hill Lamson, who was born in Summit Point (then in Virginia), Jan. 6, 1828, resided in Bunker Hill and Mill Creek as a child and later established a law office in Martinsburg.

In 1851, Lamson was admitted to the Illinois Bar which was comprised of Lincoln, Judge David Davis and Leonard Sweet.

Lincoln looked Lamson over when they were introduced by the Honorable J. T. Stuart and is reported to have said, "Don't think you'll succeed as a rail splitter," but they soon became partners and friends, riding the judicial circuit together on horseback and by buggy.

In 1850, Lamson returned to Berkeley County and wed Angelina Turner, from near Shepherdstown. They had three daughters, Julia Hill and Kate Lincoln Lamson, who both died in infancy, and Dorothy who was only five months old when her mother died.

Lamson sent his daughter to live with his sister and her husband, William and Annie Morgan.

When Lincoln was elected president, he asked Lamson to accompany him to Washington to serve as his consultant and bodyguard. Lamson agreed.

Lamson lived and breathed the turbulence of America's history, a constant companion to the president.

He said that a day or two before the dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Lincoln was told he would be expected to make a speech. From his hat (the usual receptacle for his private notes and memoranda), he drew a sheet of foolscap on one side of which were written, Lincoln informed Lamson, the notes for his intended speech. The 20-line speech, though not well-received at the time, is well-remembered and revered today.

Lamson was made Chief Marshal of the District by his friend the president and, particularly following the start of the Civil War, acted as the president's bodyguard. He is reported to have spent many nights outside Lincoln's bedroom with pistol, knife and iron knuckles rolled up in a blanket with him.

"This boy wants me to sit in his lap all day with him so that he will be sure I'm safe," Lincoln is quoted as saying.

Early in April, much against Lamson's wishes, the president sent him to Richmond concerning the calling of a

reconstruction there. On the eve of his departure, Lamson asked Lincoln not to go out while he was away, particularly to the theater. Lincoln promised to do his best. He shook hands with Lamson and said, "God bless you." Lamson was never to see him alive again. Lincoln was shot at Ford's Theatre by John Wilkes Booth while enjoying the play "Our American Cousin," April 14, 1865.

Lamson resigned his post as District Chief Marshal in June 1865. He resumed the private practice of law in Washington briefly with the Honorable Jeremiah S. Black and his son. At one time, Lamson had a law office in Martinsburg when he was associated with Carleton Hughes.

Lamson died in Martinsburg May 7, 1893 at the home of his brother, Robert, in the Burkhart Building (later the Downey-Henson Building which was torn down last year) on the Square. He is buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery in Gerrardstown.

His daughter, Dorothy, visited Gerrardstown many times following her marriage to a Frenchman and their consequent move to his country. She is said to have crossed the Atlantic 12 times for her summer visits.

Her last public appearance in Martinsburg was in 1951 when she spoke to the local Kiwanis Club. She died Jan. 20, 1953, in her mid-90s, and is also buried in the family plot in Gerrardstown.



# Owners donate Lamon House for relocation

4-29-82 V.C. Museum

The owners of the Lamon House in Danville have donated the 130-year-old frame building to the Vermillion County Museum Society — a big step in the effort to relocate and preserve the home.

The single-story house, located at 302 W. North and believed to be the oldest frame structure in the city, once was the home of Ward Hill Lamon, 1828-93, who was a law partner to Abraham Lincoln, served as the 16th President's bodyguard and U.S. marshal for the District of Columbia and was a Lincoln biographer.

The drive to relocate the house for preservation began last fall when Danville's Sheraton Inn at 77 N. Gilbert announced expansion plans for the site.

The owners of the house, Eugene and Wendell Wright, Danville law partners, and Zona Wright, wife to Wendell, now have donated the house to the museum society.

But the drive for funds to buy other property and relocate the Lamon House are still under way — with the Wrights placing a June 1 deadline on removing the structure from the North Street site.

Lloyd Hilleary, co-chairman of the Lamon House Fund Drive, said an estimated \$65,000 is needed to complete the project. A total of \$25,800 has been raised so far, he said.

The museum society hopes to place the house on property adjacent to the museum, located at 116 N. Gilbert.

Hilleary said that further fund-raising activities are planned, such as a "Run for the Lamon House" footrace on May 15 and a 2 p.m. open house at the Lamon House on May 16.



Eugene and Wendell Wright, with Zona Wright, center, present Lamon House to Marian Hall, left, museum society secretary, and Dorothy Sturm, society president.



# Museum, park system get grants

*V.C. Museum*  
By Kevin Cullen

C-N Staff Writer *7-26-86*

The Lamon House and the county park system have won state grants totaling about \$8,000, pleasing local officials who must cope with tight budgets.

Gov. James Thompson announced the awards as part of \$3.2 million in grants that will go to 48 Illinois museums and other public institutions.

The Vermillion County Museum Society will receive \$3,200 for the Lamon House, an 1850 cottage in Lincoln Park.

The house, restored in antebellum fashion, is open to the public. It was built by the daughter of Danville's founder, and has Lincoln associations.

"It's great news," said Ann Bauer, museum director. She said that costs associated with running the Lamon House were submitted to the state. The state, then, decided the size of the grant.

The Vermillion County Conservation District Museum was awarded \$4,758.

"We're very pleased. We got \$2,000 last year," said Ron Pennock, executive director of the conservation district.

The money will be used to help defray operating costs at the county park district's visitors' center, nature center at Forest Glen, exhibits at its Pioneer Center.

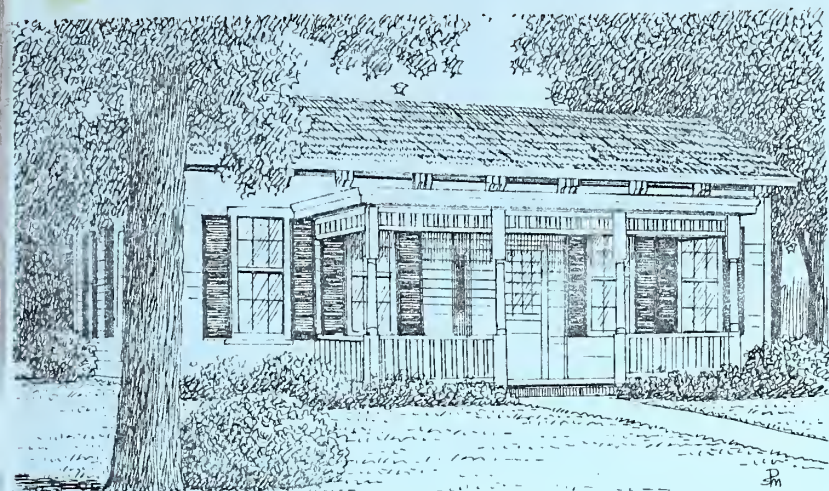
Museums, zoos, planetariums, historical societies and conservation district museums across the state were considered for the grants, each totaling \$3,000 or more. The size of each grant is based on a mathematical formula that takes into account annual expenditures by the institutions.

The grants make up about 3 percent of the operating budgets of the eligible institutions. Until the aid program was introduced nine years ago, there was no state support of museums operated by a unit

All recipients must be permanent, non-profit institutions.

Chicago-area museums got the lion's share of the grant money. The Art Institute of Chicago got \$925,451; Museum of Science and Industry, \$429,914; Field Museum of Natural History, \$423,179; Brookfield Zoo, \$568,168; Shedd Aquarium, \$130,125.





Lamon House

Danville, IL

# The Lamon House

OPEN SUNDAYS

1:30 - 4:30

MAY - OCTOBER

Probably the oldest frame residence in Danville, this house has connections with three important persons of Danville history. It was built in 1850 by Joseph and Melissa Beckwith Lamon. Melissa was the daughter of the man after whom Danville was named -- Dan Beckwith. Her husband, Joseph Lamon, was the cousin of Ward Hill Lamon, a Danville attorney who was for four years the law partner of Abraham Lincoln, and who later went to Washington, D.C. with Lincoln to act as his friend and bodyguard during the Civil War. It is assumed that Lincoln spent more than one evening in this house as he stopped in Danville on business with his partner, Ward Hill Lamon, while riding the Eighth Judicial Circuit of Illinois.

This home remained in the Lamon family for about 90 years. During that time, rooms were added to the house and improvements were made. Originally, the house is believed to have had only four rooms with the kitchen standing as a separate structure. Later that was added to the house, and much later the two rooms at the back of the house were added. They now serve as a conference room and adjacent small service area. At some time around 1900, the existing small room off the bedroom had plumbing installed and it was used as a welcome indoor bathroom.

The Lamon House is furnished with pieces primarily of the 1850 - 1875 era. None of the furniture is original to the house.

Many older Danville residents remember the 1930's when this home stood on North Street. It was known as "The Bird House" because of its Victorian charm and the fact that its owner was Laura Bird, the surviving daughter of Joseph and Melissa Lamon who had built the house in another era, nearly a century earlier.

The Lamon House later served as a gift shop and then as two attorneys' offices. It was donated to the Vermilion County Museum Society by those attorneys and in 1982 was moved to its present site in Lincoln Park where it stands under immense shade trees as a reminder of an era that is past.

Lincoln Museum guest  
from Dorothy Chase





# The Pantagraph

40 pages, 4 sections

WEDNESDAY, June 28, 2000

Bloomington-Normal, Illinois 50c

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Lincoln friend, bodyguard had ties to Bloomington

By MICHAEL FREIMANN  
Pantagraph staff

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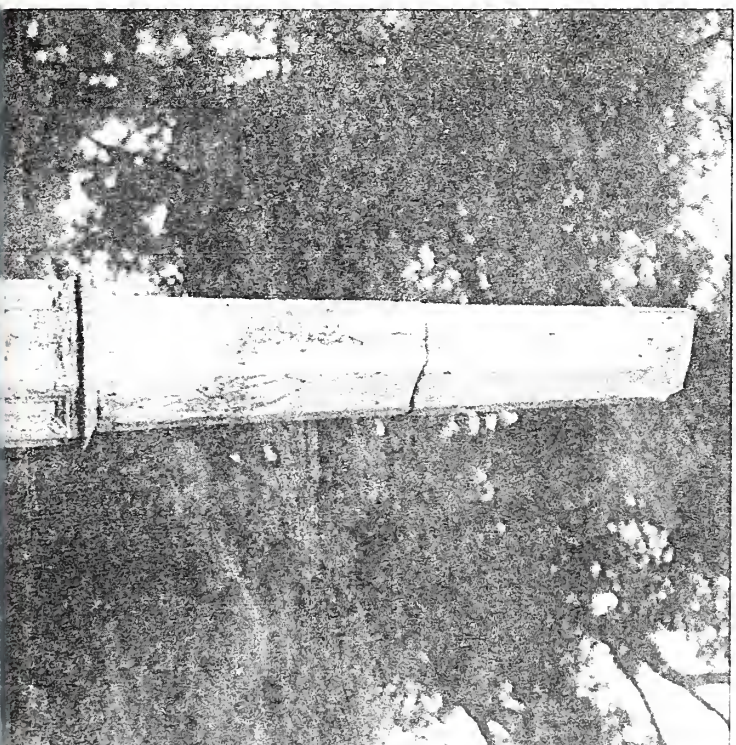
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Ward Hill  
Lamon

the nation's history might have been much different had the president heeded the warnings of Lamon, the former Bloomington man Lincoln affectionately called "Hill." The brash transplanted Virginian, known for his practical jokes and fine singing voice, escorted the newly elected president to Washington in the spring of 1861 and served as the marshal of the District of Columbia and Lincoln's personal bodyguard during the Civil War.

Sent on an errand by Lincoln a few days before the president was assassinated and unable to protect him from his fate, Lamon's last duty to his friend was to escort Lincoln's body back to Springfield for the funeral.

Lamon was held in high esteem among Lincoln's closest friends, including David Davis of Bloomington, who was the 8th Circuit judge when Lincoln was one of the circuit's roaming lawyers and Lamon was the prosecutor.

In a letter to Secretary of State William H. Seward a mere five weeks after Lincoln's death, Davis suggested Lamon be appointed governor of Idaho to re-



The Pantagraph/MAUREEN O'CONNOR

This stone in Bloomington's Evergreen Memorial Cemetery marks the grave of Angelina Turner Lamon, the wife of Ward Hill Lamon, Abraham Lincoln's bodyguard. Lincoln attended the funeral at the cemetery April 14, 1859.

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ward him for his faithful service.

"Mr. Lincoln was greatly attached to our friend, Col. Ward H. Lamon," Davis wrote. "I doubt whether he had a warmer attachment to anybody and I know that it was reciprocated."

## Bloomington days

Lamon began his association with Lincoln in 1832 while living in Danville. Eighteen years Lincoln's junior and determined to become a lawyer, Lamon became Lincoln's law partner, handling the paperwork while Lincoln worked the courtroom.

Lamon moved to Bloomington in 1856 and lived for four years in a house at 604 N. Madison St. His wife, Angelina, is buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

When she died in 1858, The Daily Pantagraph reported that Judge Davis adjourned the court and the lawyers, including the "Hon. A. Lincoln," went to the graveside service.

Lamon was known in Bloomington for his sense of humor and outlandish style, including his longish hair, drooping mustache and penchant for lavender waistcoats. Newspaper reports portray him as a heavy drinker who would assume his fellow lawyers by singing on the long trips between circuit courts.

## Conning the convention

When Lincoln's name began circulating as a possible presidential candidate in 1860, many of his Bloomington friends — including Jesse Fell, Leonard Swett and Davis — worked hard to secure the Republican nomination.

Heading into the convention in Chicago that summer, the race was tight between Lincoln and Seward.

In a story recounted in Carl Sandburg's landmark biography of Lincoln, Lamon is credited with manufacturing bogus tickets to the convention and distributing them to Lincoln backers. In a time when conventions were decided by partisan crowds and voice votes, Lamon's work assured Lincoln the nomination.

Upon Lincoln's election as president, he asked Lamon to join him in Washington. According to historian James A. Rawley, Lincoln said, "Hill, on the 11th I go to Washington and I want you to go along with me.... In fact, I must have you. So get yourself ready



Pantagraph file photo

People gathered on Bloomington's courthouse square in 1865 as they reacted to news of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination.

and come along."

## The Washington years

Lamon did, helping to sneak the president into the capital from Baltimore when it was learned that an attempt might be made on Lincoln's life.

According to Sandburg's biography, lawyer Norman Judd, who arranged the passage from Harrisburg, Pa., to Washington, asked Lamon if he alone could protect the president. Lamon responded by whipping open his coat to reveal two pistols, two derringers and a couple of long-handled knives.

Once in Washington, Lincoln appointed Lamon as marshal of the District of Columbia. Lamon took this to mean that Lincoln's safety was his primary responsibility, and near the end of the Civil War, he seldom left the president's side.

After the firing on Fort Sumter, Lincoln personally dispatched Lamon to Charleston, S.C., where he met with Maj. Robert Anderson,

the commander of the Union garrison there. According to Lamon's memoirs, he was accosted by a mob there and was saved only after an old acquaintance, Lawrence Kelt, vouched for him and bought them all a drink.

## Gettysburg witness

Lamon accompanied the president nearly every time he left the White House during the war, and was at his side when he gave his famous address at Gettysburg in 1863.

He introduced the president before that two-minute speech and in his memoir recounts how many of the other politicians there that day were disappointed by Lincoln's words. He notes, however, that upon further consideration he considered it to be a "masterpiece of English composition."

In 1952, a glass plate photograph discovered in the National Archives is believed to be the only known picture of the president at the Civil War cemetery. In a detailed shot of

the picture, immediately to Lincoln's right is Ward Lamon.

## Impending doom

As the war progressed, Lamon found himself more and more concerned with Lincoln's safety, constantly warning the president to be cautious. Once, he even tendered his resignation when he felt Lincoln was ignoring his advice.

In that letter, dated Dec. 10, 1864, Lamon wrote, "Sir, I regret that you do not appreciate what I have repeatedly said to you in regard to the proper police arrangements connected with your household and your own personal safety. You are in danger."

Lincoln refused to accept Lamon's resignation.

Upon General Robert E. Lee's surrender, Lincoln arranged to send Lamon to the Confederate capital of Richmond, Va., to oversee the surrender. It was during Lamon's absence that Lincoln was assassinated by Booth at Ford's Theater.



Photo courtesy of National Archives and Record Administration

This is a detail shot taken from a glass plate photograph discovered in 1952 in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. It is believed to be the only photograph in existence showing President Lincoln at Gettysburg. Lincoln is seen in the center of the picture with his hat removed. To the left of Lincoln is his bodyguard, Ward Hill Lamon.

Weeks later, Lamon rode with Lincoln's body on the funeral train from Washington to Springfield.

With his government career over, Lamon moved to Denver, Colo., where he practiced law. Later, he returned to his birthplace in what had by then become West Virginia. He died in Martinsburg, W.Va. on May 7, 1893.

## Remembering a friend

After Lincoln's death, Lamon began gathering information on his close friend in the hopes of writing a book. He purchased a huge collection of documents from William Herndon, Lincoln's Springfield law partner, for \$4,000. In 1872, "The Life of Abraham Lincoln" was published.

The book immediately was panned by critics who felt it went too far in portraying Lincoln's rustic manner and that it tore down the reputation of the former president, who most biographers were elevating to the level of near saint.

A second book of memoirs, "Recollections of Abraham Lincoln," upon which much of this story is based, was published after Lamon's death and edited by his daughter, Dorothy Lamon Teillard, a

## Bloomington native.

That book was much better received and contains an intimate look at both men. It also contains portions of the thousands of letters written to Lamon during his life, including some from such Bloomington friends as Davis, Fell, Swett and Eugene Field.

It is in the final chapter of this book that Lamon recounts his conversation with Lincoln on the eve of his departure for Richmond on April 12, 1865, two days before the assassination.

Lamon wrote that he asked Secretary of the Interior J.P. Usher to persuade Lincoln to remain at the White House because he feared an attempt on the president's life.

"I wanted him to promise not to go out after night while I was gone, particularly to the theatre," Lamon wrote.

Lincoln chided Lamon for his constant vigilance and sent him off saying, "I promise to do the best I can towards it. Goodbye. God bless you, Hill."

The last line of Lamon's book reads: "This was the last time I ever saw my friend."

## Lamon

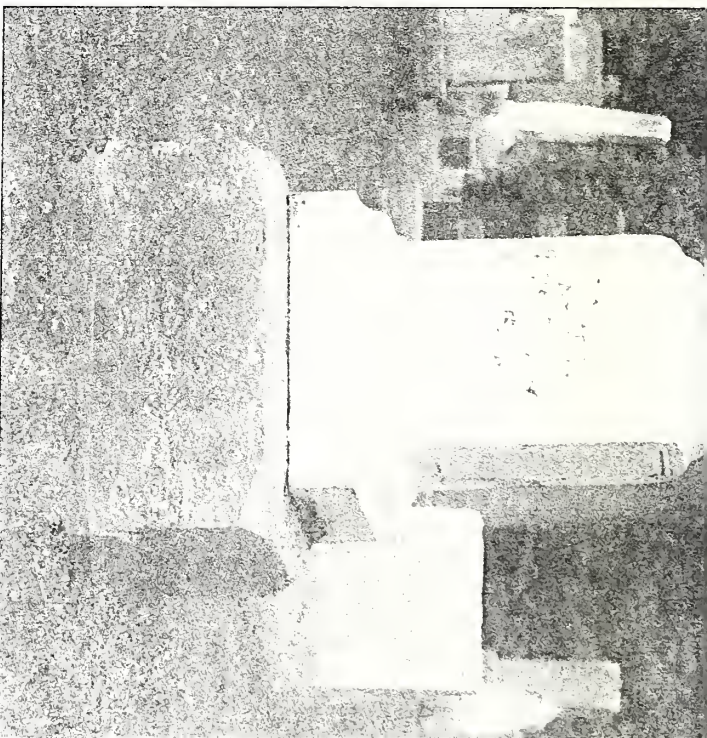
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